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Winter Line amuses tourists in Mussoorie



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Koshiyari exhorts Mahila Morcha to take message to people



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State of refineries has changed considerably in Doon: Deshmukh

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Cong finally extends support

VS passes Lokayukta Bill unanimously

By STAFF REPORTER

DEHRADUN, 1 Nov: The 'Uttarakhand Lokayukta Bill 2011' was passed today in the Uttarakhand Assembly after over four-and-a-half hours of debate, with the Congress finally extending support and withdrawing its motion for the bill to be referred to a select committee.

Winding up the discussion on the bill, Chief Minister BC Khanduri sought to allay the numerous fears expressed by mostly Congress members, but also of the BSP and UKD, that it would not stand constitutional scrutiny. Emphasising that the 'haste' involved in bringing the bill had nothing to do with seeking an advantage in the coming elections, Khanduri said he had steered clear of politics while introducing the bill for just this reason. Countering charges that the BJP government had done nothing about corruption during its four and a half year term, he declared that his party would go to the hustings with its record of five years in comparison to the earlier five years of the Congress; the five years of Vajpayee's term and the decades of Congress rule at the Centre; the withdrawal of the industrial

package given by Vajpayee by the UPA government, etc.

He said it was important to understand the urgency in passing the Lokayukta Bill because not only was there a nationwide environment seeking strict action against corruption, but also as a contrast against the 43 year delay on the Lokpal Bill at the Centre. The Lokpal Bill had been sent seven times to select committees only to be put in cold storage.

Responding to specific objections raised by the Congress and other opposition members, he said that the criticism of the composition of the committee to select the Lokpal was unfounded as it had more neutral members as compared to that suggested by the Union Government for the Lokpal. He asserted that the Law Department and the Law Commission had been consulted on drafting the bill and fears that it would prove ultra vires of the constitution were unfounded. It would stand the scrutiny of the Governor and the Centre, even though it had some content that was on the concurrent list.

To the criticism that the condition for 'unanimity' among the Lokayukta members on taking action against the Chief Minister,

ministers and MLAs was tantamount to ensuring their prosecution would never be undertaken, he said it actually implied the kind of consensus that was practiced by benches of the High Court and Supreme Court. The powers of contempt granted to the Lokayukta were also limited, and the task of prosecution would be passed on to the special courts.

To the demand that NGOs be included in the ambit of the Lokayukta, he said it was basically for government servants, and NGOs would be investigated only if they were run by public servants or if accountability was sought on expenditure of government funds. The doubts on the bill would be further clarified once the rules on the law were formulated, as specifics could not be part of the bare act.

Irrked by the repeated charge of the Congress that the bill was a 'political gambit' focused on the coming elections, he threw an open challenge to tumultuous applause by party members that the BJP would contest on the basis of its performance. The challenge was accepted with equal alacrity by Leader of the Opposition Harak Singh Rawat.

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Kiran Bedi addresses students of St Joseph's Academy in Doon. (News on Page 16)

'Commission of Inquiry on 56 scams between 2002-07'

Government braces its anti-corruption plank, sends 17 cases to Vigilance for action

By STAFF REPORTER

DEHRADUN, 1 Nov : The BJP-led Government in the State exploded a political bombshell of sorts and created quite a flutter in the political circles here, on Tuesday, by opening the Pandora's Box of alleged scams that took place during the erstwhile Congress regime between 2002 and 2007. The Government's move to refer at least a part of total of 56 cases to the Vigilance Establishment sent shockwaves among the rank and file of its main political rival, the Congress party, besides also taking wind out of the sails of

its adversary a few months before the Assembly elections, due to be held in February 2012.

According to Government sources, the Commission of Inquiry which was constituted to investigate irregularities that took place in different departments of the State government between 2002 and 2007, has found irregularities at the level of the public servant and the department in at least 17 cases. The State Government has sent all these 17 cases to the Vigilance Establishment with the directions that suitable statutory action be initiated in the cases where irregularity is found to be

committed by a public servant under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

According to the information furnished by the Government, the cases in which irregularities were found to have been committed include leasing out State Government's horticulture gardens, dispute relating to Matela Cold Storage, irregularity in purchase of equipment in I.T.I., fraudulent transaction in the allotted budget and misappropriation and embezzlement of crores of rupees without any construction of the canal, purchase of medicines in the Medical Department, corruption in recruitment of pharmacists

and recruitment of drivers, serious financial irregularities in the disaster management work plan prepared for the landslide taking place at Varunavat in Uttarkashi, extending assistance to Education Guarantee Centres and Maktab Madrasas opened in an irregular manner in Nainital by the Uttarakhand Education Board, Dehradun, indulging in corrupt practices by former Divisional Forest Officer Laxman Singh Rawat of the Tons Forest Division, and misuse of the Government grants by the Nagar Panchayat Dineshpur thus causing financial loss to the State.

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